

CLEANSING: A COVENANT BLESSING NO. 1921

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean:
from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.”
Ezekiel 36:25.*

THIS is one of the opening words of the glorious covenant of grace. Ezekiel's copy of the covenant is full and clear, and deserves to be written in letters of gold and hung up in the best chamber of every believer's dwelling. This is the *Magna Charta* of saints; the title deed of the land of our inheritance. Glorious covenant of grace, our heart delights in every line of promise wherewith you are enriched!

You perceive that this promise deals with *sin*, and it deals with sin because sin broke the first covenant, and thus ruined us all. Sin must be removed before covenant relationship can be re-established. Sin must be purged from the conscience before covenant communion can be enjoyed. Sin must be abhorred before covenant union can be consummated. Blessed be God, sin shall be washed away, for thus it is written in the everlasting covenant.

Sin is the great plague and pest of our lives, now that we are awakened to discern between good and evil, and now that the new heart and the right spirit have been put within us. Is it not well that this cause of misery should be destroyed? It is sin, my brethren, that keeps us away from God. Should not this barrier be utterly broken down and swept out of the way? It was because of sin that we needed to be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Should not that atoning death effectually kill sin? Sin has done all the mischief. At first it withered Paradise, and sowed the earth with thorns and thistles, and ever since it has brought forth the same painful crop. Still it saps our strength; it destroys our comfort; it robs us of usefulness; it is the foe of all good; it is all ills in one. O curse of curses, fountain of hell, and father of the devil, you unutterably horrible monster, sin! Shall we not be doubly blessed when we are rid of you? We certainly should never fear death if we had no sin, neither need we even fear the devil himself, for, if there were no traitor within the city, Mansoul might laugh to scorn all the attacks of her enemies without.

Sin, to the awakened sinner, is his burden, his misery, his horror. It is a nightmare which haunts him; he can never escape from it. Like David, he cries, “My sin is ever before me.” Even when sin is forgiven, the memory of it often makes a man go softly all his days. We could bear disease if we were cured of sin, we could bear the world's troubles if there were not these spiritual sorrows. We could be content to pine in prison on bread and water all the rest of our natural lives if we could be clear from sin. Yes, I guarantee you that the darkest dungeon would be a bright Paradise to a believer, if there he could be exempt from the temptation, from the remembrance, and from the presence of sin. It is therefore a very blessed thought on the part of our God to make the covenant to bear so much upon our sin and our sinfulness, and especially to make it open with this unconditional promise of infinite love, “Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.” As the laver at the Tabernacle door, so stands this promise at the entrance of the covenant. Let us wash and be clean.

I. Our first remark at this time shall be that GOD BEGINS TO DEAL WITH HIS PEOPLE WHILE THEY ARE YET IN SIN. The text evidently implies this. He does not wait until they are clean before He bestows His love and pity upon them. He does not wait till they have saved themselves, and then come to them with a nominal salvation. He does not make promises of purification to them upon condition that they cleanse themselves, but He comes to them according to the riches of His grace, even when

they are dead in trespasses and sins. He finds them in all their defilement, rebellion, and iniquity, and He deals with them just as they are. Jesus saves sinners. God's love comes to those who in no degree merit it. His grace stoops to the ruin of the fall and lifts us up from it.

These are very simple words, you say, but there are those here to whom these plain sentences will sound like the ringing of the silver trumpets of jubilee. I know them, for I once was one of them—they are a people sighing because of their defilement, which they mourn over, but cannot remove. Dear hearts, you have not to look for any good in yourselves when you come to God, you are to come just as you are. However filthy, however enslaved by idols you may have been, however much your own heart condemns you, you are to come to Jesus on terms, not of merit, but of grace, and you are to approach Him as sinners, without any further qualification. Christ is a Savior, who came to save His people from their sins, and His salvation, therefore, begins with them while they are yet in their sins. He does not wait till He spies out some sound spot in the patient, but when he is covered all over with leprosy from head to foot, and there is not one sound speck in him as big as the point of a pin, then it is that the great Physician comes and makes the leprous one to be clean. This is plain enough, if you will look at the text, for first, it is clear that *those to whom God makes this promise of His covenant are unclean and unfit for fellowship with Him*. He speaks of their filthiness, yes of “all their filthiness,” so that there was much of it, for God's *alls* are by no means trifles. There were also idols about, and many of them, for He speaks of “all your idols.” These are abominations unto the Lord, but there they are, and they must be put out of the way. He says, “Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean,” not, “You are clean, and therefore you may come to Me,” but, “I will come to you and make you clean.”

Some time ago we explained the type of the ashes of the red cow, how they were kept in water, ready to be used and applied to all persons who became ceremonially unclean. After this water had been sprinkled upon them, they were permitted to return to the camp and go up to the Lord's Tabernacle, but until that purification had been applied they were shut out from fellowship with God and His people. The people of God could not converse with them, the priest of God could not commune with them; God Himself would have nothing to do with them. They were unclean, and so were set aside under a kind of quarantine not to come near the camp, lest the rest of the people should be polluted by them. Now that is just where God finds His people when He begins with them. They are not fit for communion; they are not fit that the saints of God should associate with them, nor that they should stand in the holy place of the Most High. They are not fit for any service, for the Lord will not have the unclean to bear His vessels. Their prayers are defiled; their praises are defiled; there is nothing about them but what is unclean. In such a condition the man could do nothing acceptable to God, his uncleanness put him out of court, and rendered him altogether incapable of pleasing the pure and holy God. He that was unclean made everything unclean that he touched, the pollution was most contagious. If he sat upon a chair, no one else might sit thereon again, for the seat was unclean. If he touched a vessel in the tent, the vessel was unclean, and the tent was unclean. He was a source of defilement, and wherever he went he spread pollution. Such is every sinner in the sight of God. He is a well of foul waters, a fountain of bitterness. He is defiled and defiling. The God of all grace visits His people at the first when they are in this terrible condition.

I may be speaking to one who is ready to cry out, “I am not fit to be in the house of God tonight. I am not worthy to lift my eyes to the place where His honor dwells.” That is where He finds you, just there, and it is to you in this sad position that the covenant of grace refers. Our Redeemer comes to us in our very worst estate. As I was speaking to an aged brother in Christ, who is, probably, very near home, he said, “I feel what a blessed thing it is still to come to Christ with the cry, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’ I do not rest upon past experience, or upon anything else, but I constantly begin at the beginning. I come to Jesus even as I did at the first, only more humbly, and with a more intense sincerity than I ever knew before.” I am sure there is wisdom in this course, and in no other. If the covenant of grace did not deal with sinners as sinners I should be afraid to come to Christ, but because it opens its mouth wide to me while I am yet unclean and polluted by sin, I feel that it meets my case. The free grace of the covenant does not come half the way, and say to me when I am nearly dead, “Get up and take what I give you, and I will deliver you.” But it comes, like the good Samaritan, where I am. It sees me to be unconscious, and it awakens me. When it sees me conscious of my wounds it pours in the oil and the

wine. When it sees my weakness to be so great that I cannot stir a step, it sets me on its own beast, and takes me to the inn. When it marks my utter poverty, so that I am not worth so much as two pence, it does not ask me to pay my own shot, but discharges everything for me, and leaves its promise that whatever more is needed shall be freely given. O blessed charity of covenant love! It will not be turned aside by our abominable filthiness, nor will it leave us because of our idols. Glorious grace, which begins with us where sin and death have left us!

You may notice in the text, or gather it therefrom by clear inference—that *these people with whom God dealt were not only unclean, but they could not cleanse themselves*. It is a rule with miracles, as well miracles of the Spirit as miracles of the body, that, God never does what others can do. As long as there is strength left in the natural laws God does not go beyond them, but our extremity is God's opportunity. Now, inasmuch as the text brings in God, saying, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean," it is clear that this evil could not be cleansed without the divine interposition. There was no other way for the purging of the chosen ones but by the direct interposition of the Lord. Oh, but divines have fine notions nowadays! It appears, according to the latest information, that, children are not now born in sin as they used to be. They say that certain highly favored children commence life in a most extraordinary way; they are born gracious at the very first. They do not need any regeneration or conversion, for the stock is so superior that the branches naturally bring forth good fruit. I have never read of such people in the Scriptures, but I am often told that there are such nowadays; at least, their parents and their parsons say so. Of old it used to be, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." That, of course, is very old-fashioned doctrine. Well, when we have a new-fashioned God, I dare say we shall have new-fashioned truth, but at present truth seems to me to be as immutable as God Himself. If it is true today, it was true yesterday, and will be true even to the end, even as God Himself changes not. As for myself, I know that I was born in sin, and I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. I know also that I once tried to purge and cleanse my own heart, and labored at it, I believe, as honestly as any person that lived. I went about to seek a righteousness of my own, and I endeavored to get quit of sin, but my failure was complete. I do not advise any other person to try self-healing. It brought me to despair; it drove me almost to the loss of reason. The more I scrubbed and cleansed, the blacker I became. I washed my black self, and he was blacker after I had bathed him than he was before. I only saw how black the black man was when I had whitened him for the moment with my soap. Job said, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me," and it was so with me. Therefore I speak of my own experience, and taught by my own failure, I cannot urge any man to seek cleansing by his own doings or efforts, but I urge him to accept that cleansing which God has promised in the covenant of grace. Cleansing cannot come from any other place, therefore seek it of the Lord, who says, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean." If you go about through heaven, and earth, and hell, you shall find no other detergent that shall take away sin but the precious blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. You shall sooner redden every wave of the Atlantic as you plunge your hands therein than you shall take away one spot of condemnation from off your soul. There is your sin, and there it must be eternally unless Jehovah Himself shall blot it out. He that is filthy shall be filthy still, throughout the ages, unless the Divine One interpose. Our only hope lies in this faithful word, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean." The Lord begins to save His people when as yet they have no strength, and cannot cleanse themselves.

More than that, when God begins to deal with His people *many of them have a special filthiness*. "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." When He begins with them they are given up to their idols. Other lords have dominion over them, and these lords lead them into filthiness. Some upon whom God has looked with everlasting love have become, before their conversion, openly, manifestly, loathsomely filthy, and yet He begins in His grace with them. The harlot—she strays into the house of God, and feels that she has no right to be there, and yet the day comes when she stands behind the Master, washing His feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, because she has had much forgiven. The man who has been guilty of foul vices, of which we say but little, but which he would gladly weep over with tears of blood at their remembrance—when the Lord of love

comes to such a horrible offender in a way of mercy, He says to him, even to him, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins.”

I am afraid I do not always speak plainly enough, though I try to do so. Let me try again to cast in the big net. The Lord Jesus Christ forgives thieves and robbers, and liars, and drunks, and criminals of all sorts. The Lord Jesus has mercy upon those who have been blasphemers. “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” I have seen with great joy cases of infidels who have mocked at the Scriptures, denied the deity of Christ, and persecuted God’s people, they have stepped in and heard the gospel, and they have been melted down by it, rescued from their obstinacy, and cleansed from their iniquity. In fact, there are such here tonight. “Such were some of you: but you were washed.” Oh, it is not for me to tell all that I know of how the Lord has taken some of the ringleaders in the service of Satan, first in all manner of mischief, and has cast the devil out of them, and made them to sit at His feet, clothed, and in their right mind. We believe in a sinners’ gospel. To the guilty we preach remission.

The heathen of old once reported that ours was the religion of the most abandoned. They laughed at Christianity, for they said it was like the building of Rome, when Romulus received everybody that was in debt and discontented, and all the criminals from all the towns round about came to make the city of Rome. There is much truth in the statement; it is a very good figure, though meant to be a slander. The Lord does receive the devil’s runaways. If there is one here that is servant to that black master, I would recommend him to run to Christ tonight, and not give his master five minutes’ notice. Quit the tyrant’s employment and run for it at once. But then look at this, the Lord receives sinners to cleanse them. He does not receive them that they may remain as they were. The Lord Jesus receives sinners just as teachers receive children into a ragged school. It is their glory that it is a ragged school. The more ragged and the more dirty, the more welcome the child. But why do they receive the ragged child? Why, to wash him, to teach him, to clothe him, to instruct him. We do not receive ragged children for the love of their rags, nor to keep them in their rags, but that they may be taught, cleansed, and elevated. Such is my Master’s house of mercy. It is a hospital, sick folk are always welcome. It is not a place for spreading disease, nor for treating it lightly; it is the place where disease is discovered, set apart, and made to appear in all its horror, in order that it may be conquered and destroyed. Nobody speaks so sternly against sin as Jesus and those who believe His gospel, but yet it forever stands true, “This man receives sinners.” You may come to Jesus, dear friend, whoever you are. Into whatever sin and iniquity you have plunged, you may come right now without any hesitation or deliberation, for the gate stands wide open, and the blessed Lord, with His nail prints still in His hands, stands there to welcome you and say, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow.”

Still is that declaration grandly true, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Still does God meet men while they are yet in the blackness and filth and degradation of their sin, and there and then, just as they are, He says concerning them, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.” O poor wretched sons of Adam, how earnestly would I invite you to Christ! I preach a Savior for the worst and vilest of you. Oh that you would come to Him! I know your house. It is stuffed full with idols of one sort or another. You delight in strong drink! That is your Moloch, or perhaps some sin of the flesh has fascinated you and carried you away, and your house is ruled by Venus and Bacchus, and other dunghill deities. Ah me, what chambers of imagery there are in this city! Notwithstanding all that, the Lord of love will come to your house with His salvation, turn those idols out, and reign in their stead. Your life, it may be, is full of filthiness, and as you sit here you are remembering it to your heart’s sorrow. Be of good cheer, you broken down ones, for the Lord Jesus will come to you just as you are, and put your filthiness away.

Do not think that I am talking now only to those who have been grossly immoral, though I do speak to them most certainly in literal terms, but even to those who have never sinned after that similitude I speak at this time. Thank God, there are some who have been kept by the restraints of education from ever going into the more outwardly filthy sins. It was so in my case, I might claim as to most actual sins to be blameless, but, oh, if there ever was a wretch on earth that felt his filthiness more than I did, I pity him. I loathed myself—utterly so. How often I wished that I had never been born! It seemed horrible to me that such a being should have lived at all. To have lived so long in sin and unbelief seemed still more

a marvel, and though I was not then fifteen it appeared horrible to have lived so long without loving Christ. What an awful wretch I judged myself to be to have been surrounded with such mercy, and not to have thought of my God! It was beyond measure shocking to have lived those years without love, without trust, without delight in God. I felt myself to be a foul and filthy a thing that ought to be cast into the common sewer of the universe, and swept away. But, oh, this blessed word, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." This is spoken as only God can speak. See, then, how God begins with us, just where we are, to the praise of the glory of His own grace. So much upon our first head.

II. The second is this—that GOD PROVIDES FOR THE CLEANSING OF THOSE TO WHOM HE COMES IN SOVEREIGN GRACE. "I will sprinkle *clean water* upon you." He does not ask them to find the purification, but He brings it Himself. Where could this, "clean water," be found by mortal man? Though he should climb up to the heights of the Alps to melt the virgin snows, or descend into the deep which couches beneath where come the sparkling springs, yet he could find no "clean water" that could take out the stain of sin. God Himself provides, it is the way of Him, in the mount it shall be seen that He is Jehovah Jireh. The type is carried out in its antitype in this way—that God has provided a system of cleansing men, perfect in itself, and just, and right, and effectual. Pure water is the best of purifiers, and the Lord has provided that which is the surest purification from sin. When under the old Mosaic Law they took water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the unclean therewith, he was cleansed ceremonially, and now under the gospel God has provided a wondrous way by which, being Himself perfectly pure, He can put away the impurities of our nature, and the iniquities of our lives.

It is a righteous way. Do you need that I explain to you the way in which God puts away our filthiness? Whether *you* need it or not, there are many who do need it, and therefore we must have the gospel over again. You put bread and salt on your table at every meal, and even so every sermon should have the gospel in it. God must be just; even if He would forgive sin He must still be just. Sin must not go unpunished; it would be ruinous that such a thing should be. Therefore the Lord took sin and laid it on His Son, that His Son might bear what was due for our transgressions. This the Lord Jesus did as our substitute and Savior. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." He made a full atonement and expiation for the guilt of men, so that "whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In addition to that, God has given the Holy Spirit as a gift of Christ on His ascension, and that Holy Spirit is here to renew men in their hearts, to take away from them the love of sin, to give them a new life, to create in them a new heart and a right spirit, and so to change their inward longings and desires that their outward conduct shall become altogether different from what it was before. Here are two cleansings—the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, and these are as clean water. God can justly forgive you, my fellow sinner, and God can totally change you and make you to be as though you had been new-born tonight and were now to begin afresh. You see it is a clean way which God has devised; there is nothing in it which favors wrong or injustice.

And what a *simple way* it is, as well as clean! "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." The application of the blood of Jesus Christ to the conscience, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the heart, is as simple as the sprinkling of water. The wisdom of God made the rite by which the leper was cleansed under the law very simple, but even simpler is the act by which God applies the merit of His dear Son to us. Oh, that we might have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on our hearts at once by faith. Oh to feel the blood of sprinkling to which every believer in Christ has come—the blood that "speaks better things than that of Abel!" It is a very simple way.

It is a *way of universal adaptation*, too; for wherever there is a soul on whom God has looked with love He can apply to that soul the blood of sprinkling. Whoever you may be, you cannot cleanse yourself, but God can sprinkle you with this clean water. He can save you by the merit of His Son, and by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. No one is outside of this possibility, for the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If you are guilty tonight and you cry for mercy, that mercy can come at you, and you can come at that mercy, for so has the Lord put it, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean."

It is a way of *unfailing efficacy*, for He says, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." He does not only attempt the cleansing, but He accomplishes it. You may have a thousand

sins, but this clean water can put the thousand sins away. Your heart may be a very pandemonium of idols, but the power of the Holy Spirit can break them all to pieces, and can do it for you at once. The “then” of the text has to do with the time when Israel was full of sin. It has to do with such a time as there is with you unconverted men and women at this hour. Now, even now, in the midst of your filthiness and your idolatry, God can come with a high hand and an outstretched arm, and commence the work by which you shall be perfectly delivered. What though your heart is like the Augean stable, the labors of Hercules shall be outdone by the wonders of Jesus. He shall cast your sins into the depths of the sea. Your hardness of heart, your pride, your lust, your unbelief, your enmity, your fickleness, shall all go down at a stroke, as when Dagon fell before the incoming of the ark of God into the holy place. Oh, do it, Lord! Do it, we pray You, with many that have strayed into the Tabernacle tonight, that Your name may have the glory!

Thus we have come so far, and we see clearly that God begins with His people in their filthiness, and provides the means of their cleansing.

III. Thirdly, GOD HIMSELF APPLIES THIS MEANS OF CLEANSING. See how He puts it, “Then will I sprinkle”—“*I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.*”

Ah, dear sirs! If God had only provided the medicine, but had never brought it to us, we could not have found it, reached it, or applied it. If He had made the plaster and had left it by the side of the wounded man, the poor wretch would have died, for he never could have laid it to his own wound. The same grace which “first devised the way to save rebellious man” carries out all the plan from the beginning to the end. Who can sprinkle clean water on the foul sinner? “I will do it,” says the Lord. I am sure that I speak to many brothers and sisters here whose experience will bear out what I am going to say, it was the Lord who made us first to feel that we were filthy, and that we loved idols. We were very fine people once—were we not? Our own righteousness was quite as good as that of anybody else, and a little better. If we had sinned, we had a great many excuses for our failings, and besides, we always meant to be so good by and by, therefore we felt that we ought not to be condemned, but rather to be commended. The Lord fetched us down from the tree, and made us lie at the bottom of it and cry for mercy. We would still have refused to taste of His mercy, and we would have perished in our sin if divine grace had not convinced us of our folly. Some of you remember when the Lord first revealed to you how much you needed to be cleansed, that discovery was a great part of the cleansing. Then did it not seem to you impossible that you could be cleansed from so much defilement? It seemed to me—I dare say it did to you—the most extraordinary thing in the world to believe in Jesus. I could not make it out. How could I get to Christ? I could see that He was a Savior. I could see that He saved others, and I was glad that He did, but the thing was, how could I ever come to be personally a partaker of His power to save? I heard about that woman touching the hem of the garment, and I felt that if Christ were before me, I would touch the hem of His garment with my finger, but I could not understand how I was to touch Him spiritually. To this day the simplest thing under heaven is perverted by our evil hearts into difficulty and mystery. Faith is as clear as the sun, yet many make it as dark as midnight. Our hearers are ingenious at misunderstanding us when we speak of faith. I tried one evening to explain faith as simply as I could, and I quoted that verse of Dr. Watts—

*“A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ’s kind arms I fall.”*

A young man came to me afterwards, and said that *he could not fall*. This perplexed me, for I thought such an assertion was impossible. It may be hard to stand, but it is easy to fall. Falling does not require strength, but the very reverse. I intended to express the abnegation of all doing and all effort, and the yielding all into the hands of Christ. But my young friend could not see it, nor could I make him comprehend it. All electric light would be of no use to a stone-blind eye. O God, it is as much a miracle of Your grace to give us faith as to give us a Savior to believe in, and he that has faith knows that it is so. Despite the simplicity of faith, no man ever would have savingly believed in Jesus Christ if the Lord had not guided him, and led him into that faith.

Oh yes, the clean water is provided, but the clean water must be sprinkled by another hand than ours if we are to be cleansed. Are we not witnesses of this? Do we not acknowledge that when at last we were

made clean through the precious blood of Christ the closing act of faith was worked in us by the Holy Spirit? That was no small thing, that passing from death unto life, that being washed in the fountain filled with blood; neither was the faith a trifle which brought us that washing; all, all was of grace. I have heard a great deal about human free will. I never felt any inclination to ascribe the great blessing of confidence in Christ, and consequent full justification, to any uncreated willingness of mine. I was “made willing in the day of His power,” and to God I must give the glory. Oh, that bright, that happy day when I could say—

*“’Tis done! The great transaction’s done!
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine.”*

At that day I could not help also saying, “He drew me”—

*“He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.”*

Yes, it is God that applies the power which purifies.

And all the way through the rest of life it is just the same. “All things are of God.” If He that has brought me so far towards heaven does not help me throughout the rest of my journey, I must die even within sight of the promised land. If the Lord is not with you, even if you should get your foot upon the diamond doorstep of heaven, and your finger on the golden latch, you could not enter. Without fresh grace to carry us the rest of the way all our previous journey is in vain. When we get to heaven, it will be, “Glory be to God forever, and ever, and ever.” We shall not hum even a single note to ourselves for our own glory, or on account of any part of the work for which we deserved credit, but we shall ascribe the whole of our salvation to infinite love, and undeserved favor, and to the unceasing faithfulness and power of our gracious covenant God.

Do let us come back to this blessed text, and read it again, and then conclude our sermon with our last point, “Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you.”

IV. I close with this last remark, THE LORD EFFECTUALLY CLEANSSES ALL HIS PEOPLE.

First, He cleanses them from all their filthiness. I do want to dwell on that for a minute. “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” All of it. Oh, what a vast “all” that is! “All your filthiness.” All the filthiness of your birth-sin; all the filthiness of your natural temperament, and constitution, and disposition. “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” All the filthiness that came out of you in your childhood, that was developed in you in your youth, that still has vexed your manhood, and perhaps even now dishonors your old age. From all your actual filthiness, as well as from all your original filthiness, will I cleanse you. From all your secret filthiness, and from all your public filthiness; from everything that was wrong in the family; from everything that was wrong in the business; from everything that was wrong in your own heart—“From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” From all your pride. What a filthy thing that is! From all your unbelief. What an abominable thing that is! From all your tainted imaginations; from all your lusts; from all your wrong words; from all your covetousness; from all your murmuring; from all your anger; from all your malice; from all your envy; from all your distrust; “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.”

Just read right down the Ten Commandments and then stop at each and say, “Lord, You have said, From all your filthiness will I cleanse you. Lord, cleanse me in both ways; take away the evil of the sin, and take away my tendency to the sin—

*‘Let the water and the blood,
From His riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.’”*

Oh, beloved, that seems to me to be so full of richness—“From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” Do not believe that any filthiness need stay upon you in practice. As to the matter of sanctification, do not say to yourself, “I cannot overcome this sin.” You can, you must overcome all sin through Jesus Christ. “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” Do not say to yourself, “I always was quick-tempered, and I must always remain so, for this is a part of my natural temperament.” No; “From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.” I know that a certain troop of our sins are hard to kill in battle, and

they need to be sharply looked after lest they continue to plague us. They get into the cave of our secret hearts, and there they hide themselves away in great quietness, biding their time. They do not even whisper, and we half fancy that they are dead; they are alive enough, as we shall soon see, if we are not awake to them. If we are foolish we are content to roll a big stone at the mouth of the cave, and let the rascals live in their den. This is dangerous work, and when our Joshua comes to us He puts an end to the perilous experiment. He cries, “Bring them out. Hang them up before the sight of the sun, for these enemies must not live.” God help us to never tolerate any known sin. We too readily fall into evil habits, but oh, for grace to keep out of them. Do not excuse sin so much as to call it an “infirmity,” call it rather an infamy, and scout it from your presence. We do unguardedly yield to sin, but, brethren, we must not excuse ourselves, but we must seek with all our might to obtain perfect holiness. Oh, to know the fullness of this blessing—“From all your filthiness will I cleanse you.”

And then it is added that we shall be cleansed “*from all our idols.*” We are all of us idolaters by nature and by practice. The unregenerate man has always an idol. He will worship anything rather than his God; yes, he will sooner worship himself than his Savior. Even the Christian may find to his own surprise that his dear Rachel whom he loves so much has managed to hide the idols away under the camel’s furniture, and she is even now sitting on them and concealing them. I do not know an idol that is more apt to escape being broken than the idol that some beloved Rachel protects. But it must not be, “the idols He shall utterly abolish.” God’s way is, “From all your idols will I cleanse you.” If there is anything, beloved, that has our love more than God, it is an idol, and we must be purged from it. This is not a threat but a promise; it is a great blessing to have our images of jealousy put away. If you make an idol of a child, either that child will die, or something else will happen which will make your idol to be your burden. If you want to kill your husband, idolize him. If you desire ill to a beloved one, set him up in Christ’s place. We can, alas, make idols of baser things than these, we can love gold, or dress, or honor, or rank, or even a forbidden thing. We are so dull and carnal that our affections are soon captured by earthly objects. Whatever it is that we idolize, God says, “I will cleanse you from it.” And I think that we can say, in response, “Lord, be it so”—

*“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee.”*

We have no wish that any of our old lords should retain or regain dominion over us.

Now, poor sinner! Do you see what the Lord can do with you? He can break you loose from your temptations. He can set you free from every sin that holds you in captivity. Pardon and purity Jesus gives most freely. Trust Him to cleanse you, and the work shall be surely done. Trust Him that did hang upon the tree to redeem His people, and you are delivered. Trust Him to sanctify you wholly by His Spirit, and He will purify you till every spot and wrinkle is gone. It is His work to save His people from their sins, believe in Him, and you shall triumph in His salvation.

May the Lord add His blessing, for Jesus’ sake!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EZEKIEL 36:16-32.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—46, 245, 678.**

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